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JUL/AUG/SEPT2020
TURNING TROPICAL
» Pandemic pastimes
» How do stocks work?
» Safe exercising in hot weather
» I had such great plans for summer...
» It's back to Mother Nature for athletes
» People, etc.: Ed Manibusan, Alvin Alvarez, Sarah Vander Wal

familia,

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— Miss Leisha DeLeon Guerrero
Miss Earth Northern Marianas 2019
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EDITOR'S NOTE

'This too shall pass'

As we go to print, the CNMI and the bigger world are neck-deep in the COVID-19 pandemic. Some people are describing it as the predicted second wave. Nonsense. We're not even through with the first wave yet. That much is being said by many scientists and health care experts. Yes, it now appears as if much of Europe and some Asian countries are managing to control the spread of the virus—what is referred to as "flattening the curve"—but that is not the case with the United States, which is seeing its number of COVID-19 cases exploding.

Yet there is a glimmer of hope. As of this writing, the Associated Press reported that a vaccine against the virus that is being developed in the United States—at the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc.—has had a promising first test and scientists are poised to begin the final testing process—its most important step—around July 27. The U.S. government's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, who is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, is being quoted as saying, "No matter how you slice this, this is good news." The final testing phase would involve a 30,000-person study to prove if the shots are strong enough to protect against the coronavirus.

This is indeed great news. Initial reports had said that developing a vaccine against COVID-19 would take about a year or two, based on the standard model for the creation of an experimental vaccine. That accepted model is being challenged by the speed with which many health experts are racing to find a vaccine for this disease, in hopes of getting us all back to pre-COVID-19 life. There is light at the end of the tunnel "but it's a very, very long tunnel," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University.

Meanwhile, the global economy is taking a beating, with travel effectively screeching to a halt and industry insiders predicting that it will take at least until next year to get everything restarted. Even hotels in the CNMI expect tourism not to pick up until sometime in the first quarter of 2021. The CNMI's only link to the Japan market, Skymark Airlines, has announced plans to extend its suspension of flights to Saipan until October.

In the United States, many people have lost their jobs. The unemployment rate skyrocketed to an all-time high of 14.7% in April. This usually averages between 3.5% and 4.5%. That, of course, creates its own parade of woes—a growing pile of unpaid obligations that just seem to keep getting bigger and bigger: rent, car payments, loans, utilities, credit cards, internet, mobile fees, etc. That's not taking into account household expenses like food, water, pet food, and routine medical visits. So, although the U.S. government can print as much money as it can, it cannot keep handing out free money to people to help them survive this crisis.

So this edition of TAGA *Plus* comes to you at one of those moments in history that will get written about in books and examined many years down the road. The good news (although it's not much of a consolation to many) is that, as Persian poet Attar of Nishapur once said, this too shall pass. The hope is that we all survive to get to that point.

Sinseramente,

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
Editor

COVER ART

Monika Nugent has been selling unique Balinese furniture and decorative pieces in the CNMI since 1998.

Photography by
BEA CABRERA

TAGA plus

JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER 2020
VOLUME 10 NO. 3

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THE USUAL SUSPECTS

CHEVY KATE**ALIPIO**

Chevy is one of the youngest members of the *Saipan Tribune* family and is quite busy these days learning the ropes of journalism while also undergoing football training as a member of the CNMI Women's National Team. An all-around athlete who enjoys playing all sports, Chevy had hoped to continue her passion this summer but the pandemic changed all of that. Contact Chevy at alipiochevykate@gmail.com.

BEA**CABRERA**

After arriving on Saipan in 2017, Bea and her husband adopted their first boonie-puppy, a stray they found in the jungle above Gualo Rai. Their second bonnie they found a year later in Lau Lau Beach. A lifelong athlete, Bea now enjoys hiking, Crossfit, volleyball, and the occasional game of soccer. Contact Bea at beecabbie@gmail.com.

MAMI**IKEDA**

Mami's parents used to run the Koto Restaurant in Susupe. A member of the disaster relief team C.O.R.E and the Commonwealth Racing Federation, and an advocate for the Commonwealth Cancer Association, Mami loves being a crazy cat mom and herb gardening. Contact her at mami96950@gmail.com.

JASON**MIYASHITA**

Jason is the managing director of Raymond James & Associates in Guam where he is also the senior institutional consultant and senior vice president, Investments. Jason has more than 15 years of experience in the financial services industry and was born and raised in Guam. Contact him at jason.b.miyashita@raymondjames.com.

ROSELYN**MONROYO**

With basketball in her DNA, Roselyn grew up loving the coined phrases she heard from play-by-play announcers, such as "cardiac game," and the nicknames they give players. She once played in the coed league on Saipan and, had Alvin "Musika" Alvarez gave the play-by-play of that competition, she would have asked him to call her Roselyn "The Big Meal" Monroyo, LOL. Contact Roselyn at roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com.

MARK**RABAGO**

Mark is associate editor of both TAGA *Plus* and *Saipan Tribune*. He didn't wait for the veil of COVID-19 to lift before becoming active again. He has started shooting hoops and has begun running again and has discovered running barefoot on the beach as the best cardio ever! Contact Mark at mark_rabago@saipantribune.com.

TANIA**TAN**

Tania grew up involved in sports and played tennis for more than 10 years but is now a distance runner. She is currently a student-athlete at Fordham University in New York City. She loves traveling and, at 19 has already traveled to over 40 countries. Growing up on Saipan, the ocean has been a huge part of her life so she likes to say she is the "child of the sea." Contact Tania at taniatan0701@gmail.com.

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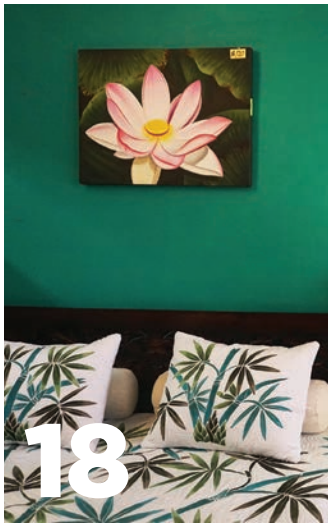

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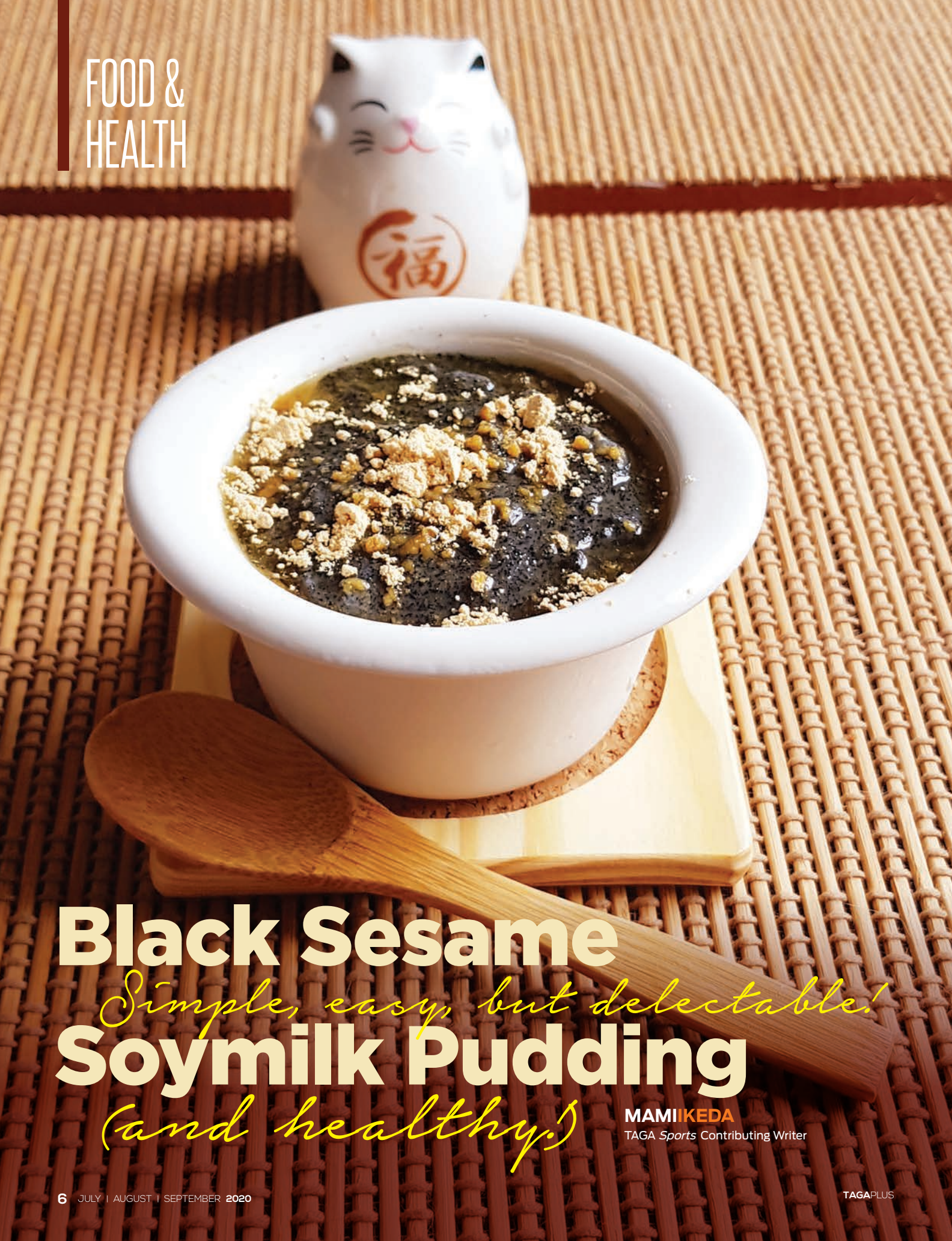

Black Sesame Soymilk Pudding

Simple, easy, but delectable! (and healthy.)

MAMI IKEDA
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

I'm not much of a sweet tooth, so when my body craves for sweets, it's got to be yummy with goodness. Black Sesame Pudding is a popular *mirenda* in Japan—one of my favorite sweets that I've been wanting to make for myself since ever since.

A healthy tip? I use honey instead of sugar, replace milk with soymilk, and use no egg or heavy cream (no baking!), but the result got me hooked again! You will be surprised how rich and satisfying this pudding is. Enjoy!

Ingredients
(2-3 servings):

- 3 tbsp black sesame seeds
- 300ml soymilk
- 1 tbsp pure honey (if you prefer to use sugar, replace honey with 3 tbsp of sugar)
- 3 tbsp corn starch

Prep the sesame seeds

Pan-roast (no oil!) the sesame seeds until they look plump, giving out a nice aroma (4-5 minutes on low heat).

TIPS: You can stir them with a wooden spatula but you will get the best result by continuously shaking the pan. Sesame seeds are at their best when freshly roasted!

Grate the roasted sesame seeds either by a sesame mill, food processor, or mill mixer.

Make a pudding mix

Put all ingredients in the food processor or mill mixer and mix until you get a smooth solution.

Cooking time!

Put the pudding mix into a saucepan, and cook on low heat, constantly stirring with a wooden spatula. Continue to stir 3-4 minutes after the solution starts to thicken.

TIP: Unlike gelatin, corn starch mix will not become harder than what you have in the pan, no matter how many hours you leave it in your refrigerator. So finalize your thickness right here!

Place your mix into serving dishes of your choice, and refrigerate for two hours.

Serve chilled with toppings of your choice. I topped mine with honey and Kinako (roasted soybean powder), which is used a lot in Japanese traditional sweets (and healthy).

CREAMY TIP: Replace half of your soymilk with half a box of tofu.

TRIPLE-SOY TIP: Add Kinako into the pudding mix.

WHERE TO BUY

- **Black sesame seeds [$1.29]:** Twins Market Lower Navy Hill and other local stores.
- **Kinako (roasted soybean powder) [$1.99]:** Himawari
- **Sesame mill [$1.70]:** I bought mine a long time ago at Himawari. You can also find one at I Love Saipan outlet in Chalan Laulau.

Returning to sports **safely** and **responsibly**

The Tan Siu Lin Foundation rallies behi
against the spread of COVID-19.

As we battle this pandemic, the TSL Fou
and diligently follow health and safety
staying active, through having some for
our mental and physical health, which c
authorities will help minimize our risk

To assist the community in navigating i
Tan Siu Lin Foundation would like to sh
guidelines that will help youth sports o
communities from the spread of the CO
supplemental and will not replace local

1

If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., symptoms/temperature checking) of coaches, officials, staff, and players safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.

2

Modify practices so players work on individual skills, rather than on competition. Coaches may also put players into small groups that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching or mixing groups.

3

Minimize equipment sharing and clean and disinfect shared equipment before and after used. Clean and disinfect areas used for practices and games, whether outdoor or indoor. Keep each player's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, bags, or areas.

7

Sports with a large number of players on a team may increase the likelihood of spread, compared to sports with fewer team members. Consider decreasing team sizes, as feasible.

8

Teach and reinforce the use of cloth face coverings. Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease). Face coverings may be challenging for players to wear while playing sports. Face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.

9

Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high-fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.

nd our local and federal authorities in our fight

ndation encourages the community to stay active
protocols. Medical experts and studies suggest that
m of exercise, like playing sports, can boost both
coupled with practicing safety measures set by
of contracting the disease.

ts return to sports safely and responsibly, the
are the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's
rganizations protect players, officials, families, and
VID-19 (Please note that these guidelines are just
/state safety rules and regulations).

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Tan Siu Lin Foundation

4

Maintain social distancing by increasing space between players on the sideline, dugout, or bench. Coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together. Space players at least 6 feet apart on the field while participating in the sport (e.g. during warmup and simulation drills). Encourage players to wait in their cars with guardians until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group.

5

Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Do not allow spitting and encourage everyone to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used.

6

Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.

10

Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.

11

Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms). Promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs such as by properly washing hands and wearing facemasks.

12

Limit the use of carpools or van pools. When riding in an automobile to a sports event, encourage players to ride to the sports event with persons living in their same household.

JASON B. MIYASHITA
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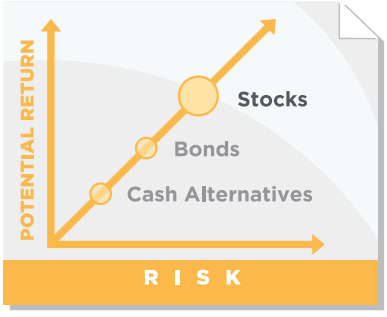
TAGA *Plus* Contributing Writer

Types of investments: **Stocks**

How do stocks work?

When you buy a company's stock, you're purchasing a share of ownership in that business. You become one of the company's stockholders or shareholders. Your percentage of ownership in a company also represents your share of the risks taken and profits generated by the company. If the company does well, your share of its earnings will be proportionate to how much of the company's stock you own. The flip side, of course, is that your share of any loss will be similarly proportionate to your percentage of ownership.



If you purchase stock, you can make money in one of two ways. The company's board of directors can decide to distribute a portion of the company's profits to its shareholders as dividends, which can provide you with income. Also, if the value of the stock rises, you may be able to sell your stock for more than you paid for it. Of course, if the value of the stock has declined, you'll lose money.

SIZE	DESCRIPTION
Large cap	▪ $10 + billion ▪ Widely bought and sold ▪ Often are well-known names
Midcap	▪ $2 billion-$10 billion ▪ Somewhat smaller than large caps
Small cap	▪ $200 million-$2 billion ▪ Less widely traded ▪ Fewer institutional investors
Microcap	▪ $20 million-$200 million ▪ May trade infrequently ▪ More difficult to research

Note: The values used to define companies by size are highly variable. Different organizations define these ranges in different ways, and the ranges can vary over time with general stock market values.

Advantages
- Historically, have had greater potential for higher long-term total return than cash or bonds
- Easy to buy and sell
- Can provide capital appreciation as well as income from dividends
- Ownership rights

Tradeoffs
- Poor company performance can affect dividends and share value
- Greater risk to principal
- May not be appropriate for short-term investment

Subject to market volatility

The role of stocks in your portfolio

Though past performance is no guarantee of future results, stocks historically have had greater potential for higher long-term total returns than cash equivalents or bonds. However, that potential for greater returns comes with greater risk of volatility and potential for loss. You can lose part or all of the money you invest in a stock. Because of that volatility, stock investments may not be appropriate for money you count on to be available in the short term. You'll need to think about whether you have the financial and emotional ability to ride out those ups and downs as you try for greater returns.

The universe of stocks offers enormous flexibility to construct a stock portfolio that is tailored to your needs. There are many different types of stock, and many different ways to diversify your stock holdings. For example, you can sort through stocks by industry, by company size, by location, and by growth prospects or income.

Growth stocks are usually characterized by corporate earnings that are increasing at a faster rate than their industry average or the overall market. Income stocks (for example, utilities or financial companies) generally offer higher dividend yields than market averages. Value stocks are typically characterized by selling at a low price relative to a company's sales, earnings, or book value.

These are only some of the many ways in which stocks can be identified, and your financial professional can help you decide which might be more appropriate for you than others. With stocks, it's especially important to diversify your holdings. That way, if one company is in trouble, it won't have as much impact on your overall return as it would if it represented your entire portfolio.

Next issue, we will talk about bonds.

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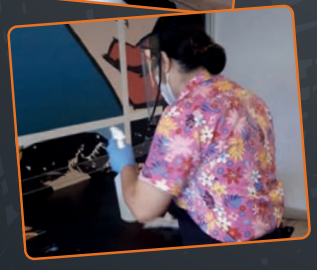

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Safety tips for hot weather exercise

QUESTION

Our family loves to exercise outdoors. With summer coming, I want to make sure our family stays safe. What advice do you have for staying hydrated and avoiding issues while working out in the heat?

ANSWER

Exercising in hot weather puts extra stress on your body. If you don't take care when exercising in the heat, you risk serious illness. The exercise, as well as the air temperature and humidity, can increase your core body temperature.

Regardless of the activity, if you exercise outdoors in hot weather you will want to take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Watch the temperature. Pay attention to weather forecasts and heat alerts. Know what the temperature is expected to be for the duration of your planned outdoor activity. In running events, there are flag warnings that correspond to the degree of heat and humidity. For example, a yellow flag requires careful monitoring, and races are canceled in black flag conditions.

Get acclimated. If you're used to exercising indoors or in cooler weather, take it easy at first when you exercise in the heat. It can take at least one to two weeks to adapt to the heat. As your body adapts to the heat over time, gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts.

Know your fitness level. If you're unfit or new to exercise, be extra cautious when working out in the heat. Your body may have a lower tolerance to the heat. Reduce your exercise intensity and take frequent breaks.

Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration is a key factor in heat illness. Help your body sweat and cool down by staying well-hydrated with water. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink fluids. If you plan to exercise intensely, consider a sports drink as well as water. Sports drinks can replace the sodium, chloride, and potassium you lose through sweating. Avoid drinks with excessive sugar and alcoholic drinks because they can actually promote fluid loss.

Dress appropriately. Lightweight, loose-fitting clothing helps sweat evaporate and keeps you cooler. Avoid dark colors that can absorb heat. If possible, wear a light-colored, wide-brimmed hat.

Avoid midday sun.Exercise in the morning or evening, when it's likely to be cooler outdoors. If possible, exercise in shady areas or do a water workout in a pool.

Wear sunscreen. A sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself and increases the risk of skin cancer.

Have a backup plan. If you're concerned about the heat or humidity, stay indoors. Work out at the gym, walk laps inside the mall or climb stairs inside an air-conditioned building.

Understand your medical risks. Certain medical conditions or medications can increase your risk of a heat-related illness. If you plan to exercise in the heat, talk to your health care provider about precautions.

Most importantly, if you are exercising outdoors, pay attention to your body temperature to reduce the risk of serious heat-related conditions, including heatstroke—when your body temperature is greater than 104 F (40 C).

Signs and symptoms of heat-related illness are varied but may include muscle cramps, nausea or vomiting, fainting, dizziness or headache, excessive sweating, low blood pressure, and vision problems.

If you begin to experience any issues, stop exercising immediately and get out of the heat. It is imperative to lower your body temperature and hydrate right away. You may place cool, wet towels or ice packs on your neck, forehead and under your arms; spray yourself with water from a hose or shower; or sit in a tub filled with cold water. Drink fluids, such as water or a sports drink. If you don't feel better within about 20 minutes, seek emergency medical care.

Heat-related illnesses are largely preventable. By taking some basic precautions, your exercise routine doesn't have to be sidelined when the heat is on. ***(Mayo Clinic News Network)***

KRIZEL TUAZON

The Beach Road Pathway is a popular site for people exercising, walking, or biking.

EDWARD MANIBUSAN

Attorney General Edward Manibusan literally grew up near a golf course. So in a way, the CNMI's first-ever elected attorney general has always been golfing even at a young age.

MARKRABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
TAGA *Plus* Associate Editor

> **Enjoy the outdoors. Don't take the game seriously.... The secret to good golfing is that you have to enjoy the outdoors, your friends, and the competition.**

"I grew up near a golf course. My brothers were avid golfers, one the best players on the island, with the likes of Joe Sablan (Pilali), Jose Sasamoto, and many others. I caddied for them when I was in grade school, earning some money for the [movie] matinee," the 66-year old former Superior Court presiding judge told TAGA *Plus*.

The golf course Manibusan is referring to is the current Saipan Country Club, the islands' first-ever golf course that was ran by the U.S. Navy for its staff during the early years of the Trust Territory government.

In talking about how he got his start on the links, Manibusan said his brothers, Frank and John, would pick him up every Sunday to play with them and with the big leagues.

"The golf course is still there, I believe, a much shorter course than before. Our family house is still there across from Dr. Aldan's health clinic in Chalan Kiya. My house was only a few minutes' walk away from there," Manibusan added.

The 7-handicapper acknowledged that he has pretty much achieved everything he has ever dreamed of in the sport and now just plays for fun.

"I won several tournaments, big and small fundraisers. They were all memorable. ...[Now] I play for fun and enjoyment with friends. ...What I [also] enjoy the most and [find] memorable is organizing golf fundraising for schools and other charities," he added.

Aside from taking part in golf tournaments for a cause, the CNMI's highest law enforcement officer also gets a kick out of teaching the next generation of par-busters. "I formed a junior league and taught junior golf for many years, together with Jeff Taylor and the late Jess Wabol as the other instructors. I recently organized and I'm currently the acting president of the NMI Golf Federation," he said.

Manibusan advises newcomers to the links to always learn the basics first. "The grip, ball position, posture, and stance."

He also reminds golfers of all skill levels that, at the end of the day, golf is still just a sport. "Enjoy the outdoors. Don't take the game seriously. ...The secret to good golfing is that you have to enjoy the outdoors, your friends, and the competition."

As far as life in concerned, he said the key has always been maintaining a "balanced living."

"Family, work, and playing golf, fishing, working around the house, and helping others...," he said when asked what keeps him busy these days.

‘It’s like a vacation but it is work’

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Monika Nugent has been selling unique Balinese furniture and decorative pieces since 1998.

BEA CABRERA

Monika's Furniture is no ordinary shop on Beach Road. It is a magical portal, a den of treasures of Balinese art but essentially of Southeast Asian taste, with nooks and crannies brimming with trinkets and bric-a-brac that make for great gifts.

Upon entering the store, Monika's Furniture surrounds you with a calming relaxing atmosphere. "The best compliments I get from customers are, one, they are happy that I am here, and two, that my store is like a sanctuary for them because when you enter, you are immediately surrounded by beauty and calm," said Monika Nugent, the store's proprietor and namesake.

Monika's background in fashion plays a key role in choosing the items that she sells. She has an eye for colors, shapes, unique pieces, that comes into play when she goes shopping for pieces that later take up space at her shop on Beach Road.

"On my trips I visit many different stores, galleries and outlets and handpick unique pieces that I know my customers will love."

Before entering the world of furniture sales, Monika was already deep in the fashion and jewelry business for 15 years. "I opened Mon- »

Basic tropical décor ideas for your home

Living on an island doesn't necessarily mean that homeowners have a natural knack for "tropical style" when decorating their homes.

In fact, tropical décor may seem to be the easiest style to put together because it entails just simple and light pieces but, often, in our eagerness to achieve many things and plans, we overthink, go overboard, and ultimately fail, coming up with mix-and-match pieces that, tragically, do not mix and match.

In other cases, some people really don't have an idea of how to start or initiate their dream home decor due to lack of time or just simply not having the "eyes" for décor and style.

Here, Monika Nugent of Monika's Furniture gives basic tropical decor ideas to fill up, transform, and give your home or apartment that island feel. Bring the tropics into your life and feel like you are on a vacation every single day just by staying home.

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MIX-MATCH

"I like working with things that people already have in their homes. I believe in mix-matching and I always tell them,'Don't buy your whole room at once." Start with two pieces, look at it for a week and then decide if you need more."

Jump from Page 17

ika's Gallery in 1990 in Garapan next to Joeten and Brass Restaurant, where ABC now stands. After many years I branched out to selling furniture and other home decor and gift items."

Saipan saw the opening of Monika's Furniture in 1998, featuring tons of Balinese décor, paintings and furniture that combine traditional influences and modern aesthetics. She sources her items mainly from Indonesia and neighboring islands. Monika goes there to personally scout items that will catch her customer's fancy.

"Indonesia has such great artists and on every visit I discover something new. Most businesses I buy from are family-owned and

INVEST IN INDOOR PLANTS

"In a tropical home, adding plants and changing them out helps relax the mood and character of the room. Whether you add them as a centerpiece or in a corner, they'll give the room that tropical vibe. Having greens in your home immediately changes the whole look of the room. Birds of paradise or palm plants are great indoor plants."

ACCENTUATE

"It is hard to imagine when the items are in the store and then customers go home, only to realize that the item is too big or too small. I would advise to buy something plain and then accentuate it with pillows, carpets or with something you like and then go from there."

GO NEUTRAL

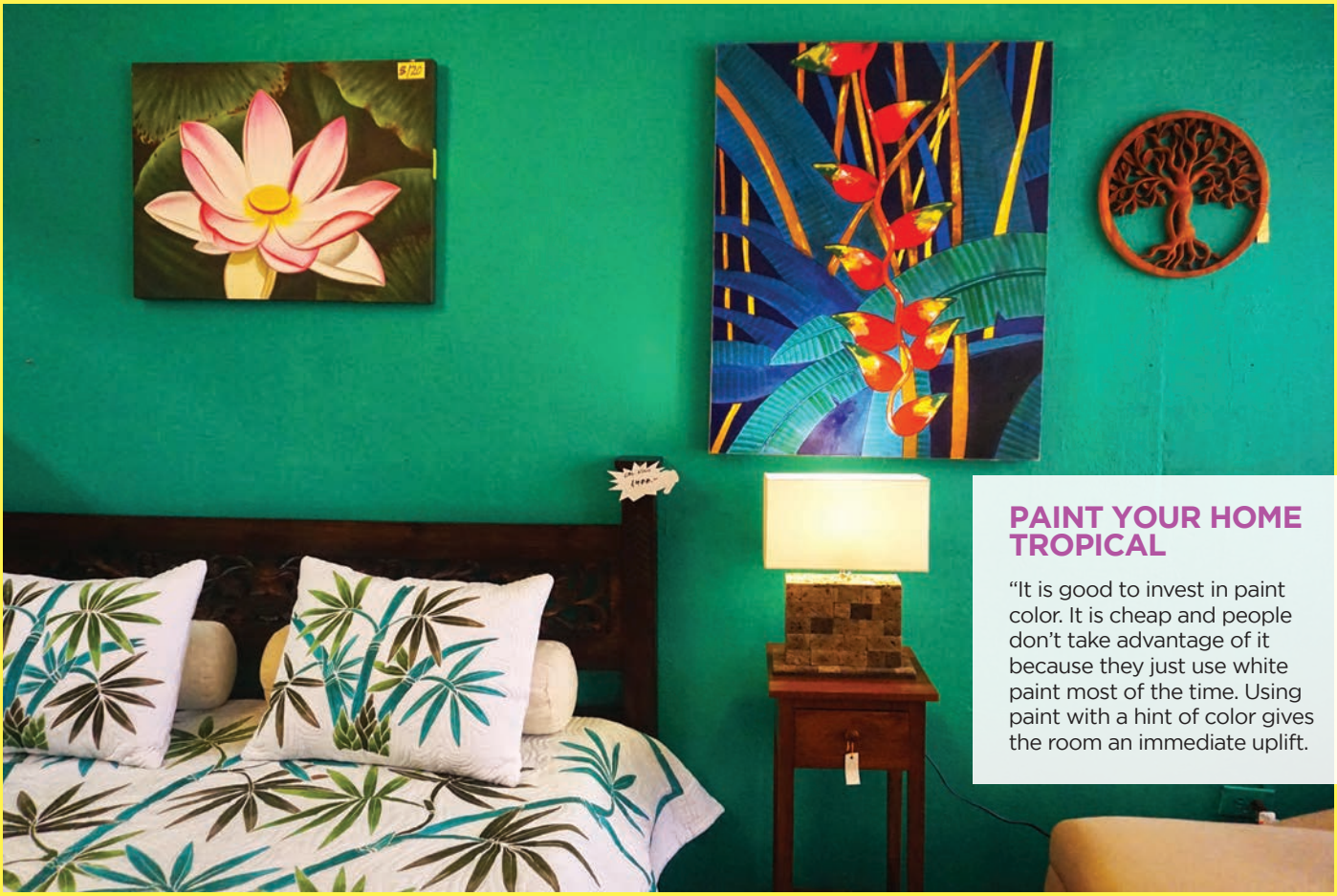
"If you don't know much about colors, then stay in a neutral tones. Get a sofa with light or neutral color and partner it with decorative pillows—for Easter, summer and Christmas."

handed down to the next generation."

Monika and her family first came to Saipan in 1978. Monika said they had to make their "own furniture because there was really nothing here. Back then the selection of home items was so limited it motivated me to open my own store. People appreciate what we have in the store and there is nothing like it in the CNMI."

This year, Monika was scheduled to go to the Expo International Furniture Fair in Jakarta, which happens once a year. That, unfortunately, got canceled because of COVID-19.

Twenty years in the business is pretty much a long run and Monika said it is her customers that keep her going. She did move the business to Guam in 2007 »



PAINT YOUR HOME TROPICAL

"It is good to invest in paint color. It is cheap and people don't take advantage of it because they just use white paint most of the time. Using paint with a hint of color gives the room an immediate uplift.

SMALL ROOM? NO PROBLEM

"If you have a big room, any kind of furniture in any color is a perfect combination. But it you have a small room, keep it light using decorative wood items or colors because it makes the room bigger."

Jump from Page 19

when the CNMI economy plummeted at that time. But she then moved back to the CNMI after five years because she missed her children and grandchildren. "Many of my old customers expressed joy and excitement that I came back," she said.

It's not all rainbows and butterflies, though. In truth, shopping in Indonesia can be very exhausting, with long hours of driving around, being stuck in heavy traffic, or visiting factories with no air-conditioning.

Also, furniture made of teak is running low in Indonesia, which makes pieces more expensive and the high shipping cost often makes it difficult to make a real profit.

"Most people come to the shop also seek

LIGHT YOUR WAY

Take advantage of lamps lights as they are simple and elegant. I personally don't like lighted ceiling fans as the only light source, because to me those are not cozy. I would rather put two or three small lamps next to the coffee table or sofa to make it more intimate."

SMALL ITEMS GO A LONG WAY

"Small items can help you a great deal without spending a lot of money. You can actually change the entire aura of the room just by adding small pieces like a figurine, an artwork, a vase, or a photo in a nice frame. Adding small items is a huge game changer because you don't really change furniture every year so keep furniture simple and spruce the room up even with small changes."

advice on how to decorate their homes and we try to help them in any way we can," Monika said.

And, as a bonus, you get to feel like stepping inside a Rudyard Kipling novel when you visit Monika's Furniture: the sun's rays streaming through the latticed bamboo curtains, motes of dust playing in the still air, the smell of incense intensely aromatic and sensual, and the face of the Hindu god Ganesh glaring at you from an alcove. The only thing lacking is a tiger lounging on a bench as you turn a corner.

CONTACT DETAIL

Monika's Furniture is located along Beach Road, Garapan. For more information, call (670) 233-44-02.

Our guide to pandemic pastimes

We've spent a few months huddling in our homes during the COVID-19 outbreak, which has given us the time to take up activities we've long neglected or perhaps have always wanted to try. After all, how hard could it really be to learn to play the violin now that we've watched all the episodes of "Tiger King"? But of all the many stay-at-home hobbies, which are the easiest for the impatient beginner? Which are least likely to annoy our family or neighbors? And, maybe most important, which are fascinating enough to last? To help you choose, check out our guide to the pandemic pastimes with the most staying power.

RICHARDCHIN
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

READING A CLASSIC

Why: Checking "War and Peace" and "Moby Dick" off your bucket list will give you smarty pants bragging rights at your next Zoom happy hour.

How hard is it: These classics are rated as "readable" by high school students, so it shouldn't be that tough.

Will it last: They may discover a vaccine before you get to the last page of one of these tomes. It's just too tempting to take a short cut, like the Disney-produced "Moby Dick" graphic novel, with Scrooge McDuck as Captain Quackhab. Or the Cozy Classic version of "War and Peace" which boils down Tolstoy's 560,000+-word epic to just 12 "child friendly" words, accompanied by needle-felted illustrations. (Spoiler alert: "Soldier. Boom!")

SOLO EXERCISE

Why: Exercising outdoors by yourself or in the privacy of your home is a comparatively safe activity during the pandemic. And because we need to work off all that fresh baked bread, there's been a boom in biking, inline skating, and home workouts.
How hard is it: You never forget how to ride a bike, but be prepared for some aches and pains if you overdo it. Oh, and dumbbells are as hard to find as Clorox wipes.
Will it last: Definitely. You'd never let that expensive new treadmill become a clothes rack, would you?

BAKING BREAD

Why: What can beat the smell of fresh baked bread?
How hard is it: It's a bit like conducting a chemistry experiment. The results are best when you follow instructions, are precise in your measurements, control the temperature and master your technique.
Will it last: Will you really have time to keep your sourdough starter alive, not to mention all that kneading, proofing and shaping? Besides, will anyone still want to eat all those carbs when we're trying to lose "the COVID-19"?

PLAYING PUZZLES AND GAMES

Why: With the kids home from school, you want a family activity that doesn't involve screens.
How hard is it: The hardest part isn't finding all the edge pieces, it's finding a puzzle. Booming sales have led to shortages. If you want to try a new board game, boardgamegeek.com has an encyclopedic listing of games organized by genre and popularity and with complexity ratings.
Will it last: If your family is competitive, there's a good chance puzzles and games will be part of your future.

DECLUTTERING

Why: Now that you're home a lot, you may look around and wonder, "Why do I have all this stuff?" Especially as your house fills up with board games, jigsaw puzzles, musical instruments, and sewing paraphernalia.
How hard is it: Closings and high demand during the pandemic made it hard to find a place to donate stuff. But the garbage service hasn't stopped. Or maybe you can try to host a socially distant garage sale.
Will it last: Depends on if all the stuff you acquired for your lockdown hobby continues to spark joy.

BACKYARD FARMING

Why: We've all acquired a bit of a prepper mind-set since the pandemic hit. The idea of starting a vegetable garden and keeping chickens sounds better than masking up and facing shortages at the grocery store.
How hard is it: You can weed, water, and fertilize, but you may find it hard to beat supermarket quality and prices. Also, you'll have to wait a while for your first cucumber or egg to arrive.
Will it last: Maybe, if knowing that you grew it makes it taste better than store-bought.

LEARNING TO SING OR PLAY AN INSTRUMENT

Why: You saw those videos of Italians applauding musicians serenading their neighbors from balconies. You want to be one of those musicians, don't you?
How hard is it: Every musician thinks their instrument is the hardest of all to play. And they're all right. But places like MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis are offering live, online music lessons. "Here's a great chance to learn something new while you shelter in place," according to the school's website.
Will it last: Don't quit your day job.

FEEDING BACKYARD CRITTERS

Why: Sales of bird seed and feeders have taken flight as people stuck in their homes try to liven up the view outside the window. Squirrel feeding has also become popular, according to a recent Wall Street Journal article, with cooped-up homebodies getting social media mileage out of videos of the antics of the urban rodents.
How hard is it: It's easy to buy bird seed. But it helps to have some video editing skills if you want to be like Mahtomedi resident Randy Lindorff, who got a quarter-million TikTok views on a slow-motion video of a crazy squirrel hanging from on a spinning bird feeder.
Will it last: As long as the coronavirus doesn't jump between humans and squirrels, we're good.

SEWING

Why: You'll feel like you're making a difference in a difficult time if you volunteer to churn out a few dozen cloth masks.
How hard is it: You might have to drop a few hundred dollars to get a decent sewing machine. And there's a bit of a learning curve. Thread tension? Bobbin winders? The Singer Start 1304, a beginner model, has a 73-page manual and a 30-item trouble-shooting guide.
Will it last: Well, someone will have to turn all those cloth face masks into quilts once this is all over.

LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

Why: Being stuck at home is probably making a lot of us eager to see foreign lands someday.
How hard is it: Apps like Babbel and Duolingo make it cheap and easy to get started in an abundance of different languages.
Will it last: It's hard to say which will come sooner, fluency in a new language or other countries allowing Americans to enter.

CARDBOARD CAT ARCHITECTURE

Why: Instead of recycling all those boxes from Amazon, you can create an elaborate, multilevel, cardboard dream house for your cat.
How hard is it: All you need is tape and a box cutter. Which you can have delivered from Amazon.
Will it last: After you finish the mansion, your cat will probably also want a cardboard pirate ship, a cardboard plane, a cardboard convertible ...

ALVIN ALVAREZ: Spicing up the game

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try watching an NBA game and then put it on "mute."

What you expect to be an exciting match turns boring, with you just watching the plays and no one is talking about it. LeBron James' chase down block becomes an ordinary deflection, Giannis Antetokounmpo's posterized dunk becomes a regular slam, and Steph Curry's game-winning triple at the buzzer turns into a usual long shot.

Basketball players' fancy moves, incredible shots, and the emotions of the game are what attract spectators on and off the court, but what make these actions even more exciting are the play-by-play announcers in the match.

Right at the opening tip, the man behind the microphone talks almost endlessly, following every player's move, giving vivid descriptions of the action on the court, and putting more life to the game.

On Saipan, where basketball tournaments are organized one after another, Alvin "Musika" Alvarez has become a regular play-by-play announcer, impressing players and spectators alike with his wit, humor, knowledge of the game, and "greeting segment."

"I used to be an announcer in basketball leagues in the Philippines during town fiestas. I also played basketball in high school, so I am familiar with the sport," said Alvarez, who earned the nickname "Musika" as he usually marks a break in the game by saying "musika" (music) and playing a song before the match resumes.

Alvarez also gave players their own nicknames, endearing him to the cagers themselves and their fans. His favorite one is Douglas "The Spider" Schmidt. The former CNMI National Team player has long arms and legs that could reach the ball easily for a defensive stop and then stretch for a layup on the offensive end. Alvarez also christened Matt "The Tank" Duenas, as the sturdy player could barrel his way through defenders.

"I also like Errol "The Mailman" Peredo because in every fast break plays, you know he will almost always deliver, while with Elmer "The Magic" Esdrelon, you don't know how the play will end up when he has the ball because he has a lot of tricks in his bag," Alvarez said.

There were also times that the players themselves chose their own moniker. "Pete Lizama told me that every time I call his game, I can call him 'Pistol Pete,'" Alvarez said.

Giving nicknames, according to Alvarez, helps fans remember the players and their signature moves.

As for calling the games, Alvarez said it's important that you know the terms associated with basketball and you must be spontaneous and call what you see on the court and even on the sidelines, including the spectators' reactions.

"You have to involve the fans because they are the life of the game. Players are inspired to play if they see a lot of fans cheering for them or even those who are not. During breaks, you also need to think how to entertain people at the venue," Alvarez.

That's where Alvarez's "greeting segment" comes into play. People approach him and oftentimes these days text him to request birthday greetings or just an ordinary "Hello." Announcements of activities are also welcome, while there are some who also request songs when it's "Musika" time.

"These sidelights provide entertainment to the crowd and sometimes ease the tension in the game," Alvarez said.

Injecting his own lingo during play-by-play calls also makes the match more exciting and elicits laughter from the spectators. He calls a player committing a traveling violation "making a Marco Polo move," referring to the Venetian merchant and explorer who travelled through Asia. He also refers to the error as "traveling without a passport." Alvarez also coined the term "meet me in the air, but don't be late," for a player going airborn for a shot and challenging his defender.

Alvarez said he loves calling a close game because that makes him talk more and get emotional, especially in the closing minutes or seconds of the match.

"You can see and feel the tension not only from the players, but also from the spectators, and even me, that's why there are times that I would shout on top of my lungs after a great play or a great shot in crucial moments. You can't control it, you become part of the crowd, too," Alvarez said.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still a concern in the CNMI and across the world, sports games on the islands have been halted. Once everything is cleared, Alvarez will definitely return to the court and help bring basketball back to life.

I had such great plans for summer. And then COVID-19 happened.

Grocery shopping during COVID-19

Here are some tips for shopping and stocking your shelves for long periods of time.

Canned and frozen

- Choose fruit canned in water, its own juices or, 100% fruit juice.
- Choose canned vegetables labeled "no salt added," or drain and rinse "low sodium."
- When shopping for frozen produce, choose plain vegetables and unsweetened fruit. Dried fruit is another less-perishable option.
- If you are allergic to sulfites, be sure to avoid dried fruits that add sulfites as a preservative.

How much should I store?

- Canned foods have a shelf life of one to five years.
- Frozen food stored at a constant temperature below 0 degrees stays safe indefinitely.
- Whatever you usually keep extras of – pasta, tuna, oats – keep a little bit more, maybe enough to last a month.

How often should I shop?

- Shop as infrequently as possible.
- Use your fresh and perishable foods first. fresh and delicate produce (leafy greens, peppers, broccoli, berries, stone fruits).
- Next turn to sturdier fresh produce such as cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, apples and citrus.

Source: foodsafety.gov, The Seattle Times
Graphic: Staff, TNS

Summer 2020 will be a different experience for many islanders due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

People often travel during summer months to visit family and have a vacation for themselves. Travel restrictions and the hardship involved in quarantine protocols has made that not a viable option.

Nineteen-year-old Kim Dalupo of Finasisu is not looking forward to a "lonely" 2020. "It wasn't like this last summer. Things have changed and it's nothing but the bitter sadness that I feel. I can't do much to enjoy this summer with friends and families. I was planning to go off-island and do a bit of traveling for myself, but there is no way I could pull that off easily."

Anela Duenas has a different approach. "I will be enhancing my crocheting skills, repotting and maintaining plants, and fishing whenever I have time. Many of us have developed other hobbies that we didn't think we would do during our normal life before. I find these interesting because experiencing a lot of new things can keep me productive day by day, especially during this summer," said the 18-year-old.

You would think that the CNMI's remote location would protect it from the COVID-19 virus, but that idea fell by the wayside when

CHEVY ALIPIO AND **TANIA TAN**
TAGA *Plus* Contributing Writer

two ranking officers of a church—a 42-year-old male and 49-year-old female—arrived from the Philippines on March 3, 2020, to their ministry mission on Saipan. That insignificant event paved the way for the introduction of the novel coronavirus to the unsuspecting population, earning for the two the label of "patient zero" in the Northern Marianas.

As the coronavirus spread through Asia in January and February, Saipan saw an opportunity to be one of the only places in the world to be COVID-19 free. But starting by the end of March, the U.S. territory—roughly 6,000 miles from the continental U.S.—of 50,000 people started seeing its number of COVID-19 cases creep up—currently at 33 as of this publication and not as many as the numbers in the U.S. mainland—but still a dismaying development for residents.

Saipan relies solely on the tourism industry to support its economy and it temporarily canceled international flights on March 25. The island, once bustling with tourists driving convertibles, now resembles a ghost town. Saipan's commercial center, Garapan, which was once filled with tourists, is now completely empty.

The CNMI's only industry is tourism. Ninety-nine percent of tourists come from Asia. It is meant to be bustling with tourists all around the island. Spring is normally the peak of the visitor season, with thousands of tourists flying from its three main markets: China, South Korea, and Japan. But as the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps through the world, the tourism industry in the CNMI has crumbled. On Saipan, tourist areas resemble a ghost town. Businesses such as restaurants, shops, and hotels have closed. Roads are empty. All you hear is silence.

"With tourism being the only industry, without inbound flights, our economy has come to a halt since late March," TanHoldings CEO Jerry Tan said. "Our company's business is being impacted like everyone else in the CNMI and around the world."

Starting last June 15, 2020, the CNMI government placed the islands on Community Vulnerability Level Blue, one step closer to the safest level, which is Green. The plan is to reopen the CNMI's borders starting July 15 and, barring any last-minute holdups, it looks like that will be happening by the time this publication goes to print. The bigger question, though, is will the tourists come? Many do not expect that to happen soon.

Most expect the CNMI economy will take at least one year to fully recover. "It all depends on COVID-19 situation around the world especially in our tourism source markets: China, Japan, and South Korea," said Tan. "But we are confident that our economy and way of life will return to normal eventually, but will be in a calculated and gradual basis with health being the priority."

Regardless of the circumstances, 17-year-old Alliyah Fernandez will try her best to have fun. "Summer 2020 doesn't look like the usual kind of summer for many of us, but I'm still going to enjoy it this year because now I am back on island and I get to spend it with my family."

She also plans to use this time to exercise and enjoy the summer on the island while practicing social distancing.

Brittany Wally, 19, from Beach Road, has ruled out plans to leave Saipan. "My plan for the summer was to fly to Washington. … [Now] I will just be working, getting back to soccer training since we are able to and working out as well."

Marielle (last name withheld upon request), 18, of As Lito, was supposed to go off-island for the summer, but now her plans have changed to excursions to the beach. "I might even bring my family and go hiking."

She is also looking forward to having quality time and enjoying barbecue in their front yard. "Although the pandemic has changed my summer plans this year, I still think this year will be memorable.

DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

ROMMEL BUENAFLOR

It's back to Mother Nature for CNMI athletes

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Swimmers dive off the partially submerged World War II-era tanks in the waters off Civic Center in Susupe.

Right photo. Spelunking is fast becoming a go-to weekend activity for many of the adventurous sorts in the CNMI.

Bottom photo. Paddlers capitalize on the beauty of Saipan waters, as they steered their canoes early morning and late afternoon to stay in shape despite the absence of tournaments and regular practice rides.

MARJ GANACIAS

SAIPAN PADDLING CLUB

f the National Basketball Association has the fancy Disney World in Orlando to host the resumption of its games amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the CNMI sports community has its own "venue"—Mother Nature.

Triathletes, who attempt to return to their routines while following government-set safety guidelines against the COVID-19 spread, turned to the Saipan lagoon for their swim slaps, enjoying the occasional sightings of stingrays and turtles and other marine creatures plus a piece of World War II history—the partially submerged tanks in the waters off Civic Center in Susupe. Bike rides then brought them up to the northern part of the island where flame trees are abloom right now, giving bikers a breathtaking backdrop as they navigate the road along Marpi. For the run part, though the pathway along Beach Road is still a favorite route, some triathetes have found a good alternative—hiking trails—such as the route going to the Old Man By the Sea and Forbidden Island.

For the entire month of July, around 40 members of the triathlon community on Saipan kept themselves busy swimming, biking, and running, to prepare for the virtual staging of the Go the Distance Challenge.

Paddlers also capitalized on the beauty of Saipan waters, as they steered their canoes early morning and late afternoon to stay in shape despite the absence of tournaments and regular practice rides. The choice spot is the Kilili Beach and most are on the V-1 canoe as the usual V-6 rides are not recommended at this time due to social distancing rules. Micro Beach is also one of the launching spots for a long haul that stretches to as far as PauPau Beach.

When Little League season was called off a couple of months ago, kids that were usually at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield or the Capitol Hill Ballfield turned their backyards into sandlots, as they threw pitches and swung their bats with no one calling out balls or strikes.

Marianas warrior Frank "The Crank" also used his backyard when he trained for his return to Ultimate Fighting Championship last June. He trained "lancheru-style," doing heavy lifts using a wheelbarrow,

ROMMEL BUENAFLOR

MARIANAS OUTRIGGER CLUB

practicing his swing by clearing his yard of *tangan-tangan*, and working on his power by digging parts of his land to plant trees. No fancy gyms needed for "The Crank" and other health buffs who converted their garage/parking lots into makeshift workout room. Family members became "gym" partners.

For those who can't go out and train, the virtual world is key. The CNMI's soccer players trained online for months, doing drills in their homes at the same time, while Rollers Basketball Club head coach Joe Diaz provided his youth teams video clips on skills development, and Northern Marianas Athletics relied on the Oceania Athletics Association's online show that features experts in the sport and tips on how to keep athletes and coaches on track at this time of the pandemic.

COVID-19 may have halted sports competitions in the CNMI, but not the sports community's desire and commitment to work on their craft and stay healthy and active. Despite the restrictions against close contact—which is virtually a requirement in almost any sport—our athletes have found ways to go around this, while also getting reacquainted with the small and often hidden pockets of the islands.

Top photo. Bikers are treated to a breathtaking display of flame trees in bloom as they navigate the road along Marpi.

Left photo. Paddlers use mostly the V-1 canoe as the usual V-6 rides are not recommended at this time due to social distancing rules.

Vander Wal makes the m

Sarah Vander Wal was supposed to stay only a year but that quickly went out the window after the Saipan Community School teacher experienced firsthand the island's beauty and warmth of its people. "I first came to Saipan in July 2016. I was planning on spending one year teaching at Saipan Community School and then move on but, four years later, here I am!" she told TAGA *Plus*.

Vander Wal eventually moved back to California last July after finishing her tour of duty on Saipan. She admits, though that her stint as assistant coach for the Saipan Swim Club has left an indelible mark on her life. "I have absolutely loved coaching for Saipan Swim Club. Coach Jacoby [Winkfield], coach Richard [Sikkel], and coach Gary [De Guzman] have all taught me so much! Getting to see the kids put in so much hard work in practice and then seeing that work pay off has been fantastic," she said.

Working mostly with the Blue team, which are Saipan Swim Club members who have completed lessons and are just learning how to be part of a swim team, Vander Wal trained them on such "fun skills" like flip turns and stroke techniques and learning how to use the clock. "Seeing how far they've come as they really start to get into the sport is amazing. I love when I can give them a complicated set and they understand exactly what I want because they have learned all the skills and techniques. I am so very proud of all of them."

Vander Wal counts the club's trip to Palau as her most memorable time with the Saipan Swim Club, and specifically the last race of the meet—the relay.

"The final race was meant to be swam as a relay just for fun between all of the islands represented. Each island was supposed to get its own lane, but the swimmers all began forming their own teams, mixing and combining members from different teams, creating an indistinguishable hodgepodge of kids in each lane. They were shouting and laughing, calling their friends, and splitting into all the different lanes."

The swimmers were allowed to swim however they chose and Vander Wal was simply amazed to see their efforts as they scooted across the pool in the most creative ways they could think of. "At the end of the race, instead of getting out, all the kids began jumping into the pool. They were laughing, yelling, and the feeling of excitement and fun was so palpable. And then the chanting began. Someone shouted, 'Coach Billy! Get in!' All the kids picked up the chant, pumping their fists in the air until Coach Billy jumped into the pool."

Billy of course is Palau National Swimming Team coach Billy Brown.

And it didn't stop there. Soon after, the swimmers started yelling for others to jump in.

"One by one, they hollered for coaches, officials, and moms and dads to hop in the pool. Eventually, almost everyone there ended up in the pool. It was such a beautiful thing to see the kids of Micronesia come together and be just like family after a whole meet of tough competition," said Vander Wal.

Competing on Saipan

Vander Wal not only coached during her four-year stay on Saipan. She was also active in other sports, taking part in running and swimming competitions. She did

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TAGA *Plus* Associate Editor

have the habit of running before coming to Saipan but never competitively and not to the extent that she ultimately did on island.

"It became a really amazing hobby for me. I love being able to get myself to places using just my legs. I did not have a car for the first few years I was here and I think that is why I really started running a lot. I needed to never feel trapped in my apartment and running was that escape for me."

Soon enough, bubble runs, colors runs, and all sort of fundraising runs became a staple of Vander Wal's weekend routine. She would then dip her toes in Tagaman, the region's longest-running triathlon. "Some of my favorite sports memories are getting to swim the Tagaman with Rommel 'Superman' Tijosejo and Joel Freeman. That was a ton of fun and I loved being part of the team."

She also became a regular in the Saipan Marathon, running the half marathon twice and the full marathon once. "I really loved the half and I especially loved the little cheesecake bites served at the banquet after. Probably the most disappointing part of my year last year was when I dropped my plate of cheesecake in the sand and had to throw it away."

'Surviving' on Saipan

Being on island during the COVID-19 semi-lockdown—so far the most challenging part of the CNMI's young history—Vander Wal got to see up close and personal what makes its people tick, not only in the good times but even during the really bad times.

"The things I will miss most about Saipan are the people I have met and learned to love. The people of Saipan are tenacious, kind, generous, helpful people. We survive super typhoons and pandemics together. We run hard races together and push each other to be better. And when one member of the community is hurt or needs help, the people of Saipan rush to gather around that person and support in any way needed. I will miss all these people who have accepted me as I am, quirks and all, and made me a part of their family."

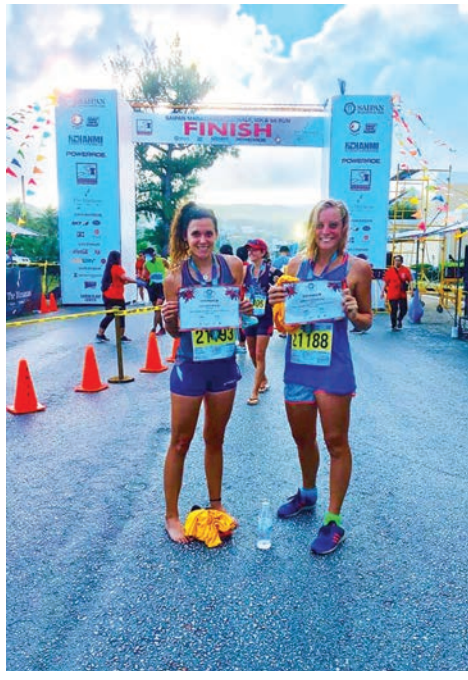
And of course, there's always the ethereal beauty of Saipan. "I will miss the unending beauty of this place. The fairy terns circling in a brilliant blue sky over the white rock of Bird Island, the glowing blue of the ocean on a dive, feeling the wind whip through my hair as I cruise down Beach Road on the way to an adventure with the very best of adventure buddies, the exhausted triumph of a run to Garapan, watching waves crash as the sun comes up at Marine Beach—these things are Saipan to me and I will treasure the memories I have made here forever," she said.

Right now, Vander Wal's plans are still pretty vague, but one thing's for sure—her first stop back in the U.S. mainland is California to see her parents, siblings, and nieces and nephews.

From there, she would relocate to Albuquerque, New Mexico, with plans to take part in the hot air balloon festival in October.

Vander Val has not entirely ruled out a Saipan return. "I cannot say whether I will come back or not. I would for sure love to come back to visit someday. This place really fits me. I love the lifestyle and almost every single thing about living [on] Saipan. Sometimes it is even strange to me that I would leave a place like this. I am not sure what the future holds. I am certainly not ruling out moving back, but also am not planning on it in the foreseeable future," she said.

ost of her Saipan sojourn



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